Weekly National Intelligencer.

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THE WEEKLY NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

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INTERESTING FROM OREGON.

We always consider our columns well employed when made the medium of communications to the Public from intelligent sources, and especially from quarters of our country of which comparatively little is yet known, describing the characteristics of the different regions of the wide domain included within our limits, with their geographical and geological features, their climates, natural products, progress of settlement, state of society, &c.

An acceptable communication of this description has just reached us from a reliable quarter in the distant Territory of OREGON, which we at once spread before our readers, with the assurance to the writer that his favors of this sort can never be otherwise than welcome to our columns.

PORTLAND, OREGON, FEBRUARY 5, 1852.

Messrs. EDITORS: I have thought a line from this distant region might be read by your readers with some interest, as the attention of our world has been directed Pacificward for a period going back a little beyond the gold discoveries. The short stay I have made will I trust be a sufficient apology for the few facts or opinions embraced in my letter.

In looking at Northern Oregon, one is struck with the grand expanse of waters of the Inlet and Sound, constituting what are indeed inland seas, in which the united navies of the world could float with safety, connected with the ocean by a wide deep strait, where vessels of any draught, in all weathers, night or day, can securely ride. The country surrounding these waters has all the elements for strong, wealthy, and independent communities. Rich soil, genial climate, deep water, water-power, exemption from storms, inexhaustible forests of the best ship-timbers, are the leading characteristics. There is here at Steilacom a military post, on the eastern main shore. There are several new settlements, the principal one, Olympia, at the south extremity of the Sound. Some fine saw-mills have been in operation on the Sound for a year or two. The Hudson Bay Company's post, at Nisqually, is also here. I have before me at the wharf a fine little schooner, the Mary Taylor, taking in a party of emigrants from this place for the Sound. Many of these families have been in Oregon a year or two and done well, but, having become somewhat "crowded" here, are seeking new homes in that promising region. The commercial advantages there are superior to those of this portion of the Territory in the facility and cheapness of the navigation. It costs a vessel in and out of the Columbia to this or any port above from $300 to $600, in pilotage, towage, and other charges, exclusive of the detention. In and out of the Sound will cost in the same description of expenses nothing. A road from Olympia to the Columbia would enable all Northern Oregon and a large portion of the Columbia and Wallamet* valleys to receive supplies cheaper than by the rivers. Such a road is already surveyed, and will probably be pushed through the ensuing year. Another road, in the direction east towards the Dalles, for the accommodation of the emigrants to the Sound, is also in contemplation.

The next extraordinary physical feature is the extreme fertility of the soil of this whole country. It is true, in some localities, continued cultivation may diminish the present yield by exhaustion, but no such places are as yet known or admitted. I half suspect there has not yet been that persevering and thorough test applied to many portions, inasmuch as the slightest labor is sufficient for an abundant crop any where.

This exuberance will undoubtedly retard thorough cultivation to a remote period, and may induce thriftless husbandry and make indifferent farmers. The southern portions of the Territory, the Upper Wallamet, Umpqua, and Rogue river regions, are not excelled as grazing districts by any portion of the earth. Hence nine-tenths of the property and exchangeable commodities there will be cattle, horses, mules, sheep, and hogs. There has been so few mills that little encouragement existed heretofore for the raising of wheat; recently several have been built, and many projected for the ensuing year, so that flour is likely to become a leading export. The expense of transportation, owing to the high rates of wages, will be a great impediment to business of every kind. Notwithstanding this obstacle, the extension of steam operations has been remarkable within the year. In August, 1850, the Columbia, a small steamer built at Astoria, started on the Columbia, to the astonishment of the natives of all the races, biped, quadruped, finny, and hairy. The "Lot Whitcomb," an elegant boat, was launched at Milwaukee the succeeding Christmas. Shortly after the steamship Columbia entered for her trips from San Francisco to Astoria. During the summer a fleet of steam craft succeeded of all sizes and kinds, including some half dozen little propellers called the "Musquito fleet." Two fine boats are running above the Wallamet Falls, the Multonomah, built at Newcastle, Delaware, for which we are indebted to the enterprise and public spirit of a few naval officers, who are serving their country quite efficiently in fresh water, and the Canemah, built at the incipient city of the same name at the falls. These boats ascend the river to points within a hundred miles above the falls; thus bringing out the vast productions of the older settled parts of the valley. The "Flint" is another good boat, built above the Cascades, now running below. Freights here will surprise some of our fresh-water sailors at home. From Portland to interior points goods cost from fifty to eighty dollars a ton freight, wagonage, &c. Pack trains to the mines are fitted out here with provisions, goods, &c. The trade increases in this direction, owing to the prevalence of deep snows between Sacramento and Charta.

That Oregon is no longer a manifest destiny, but a living fact and present reality of the largest promise, all must admit. The world tends hitherward by sea and land. The "blossoming" of "the wilderness" is not as yet exactly rose-like, for fir trees are the forest and tall grass the prairies. But, after this gloomy world of fir shall fall beneath the fire and axe, there is little doubt that roses odorous as ever graced Cashmere will bloom all over Oregon. Then there are foreshadowings of moral and religious blessings most cheering in promise. Some four or five respectable schools for boys and girls, some with college charters, are in operation and doing well. These schools are under the patronage of churches and missionary societies at home. There is a liberal spirit in favor of education. A good beginning has been made in favor of common schools, but teachers do not command as yet the superior remuneration to which their services are entitled; a state of things not peculiar to new countries. The building of churches in number exceeds school-houses, court-houses, and jails. There are several in this place and at Oregon City of creditable appearance. It is pleasant to reflect that those who come out from home, where they enjoy the high privileges of social and religious intercourse, will not be altogether deprived of them here.

The press constitutes an important feature of every country. Here the number of journals seems to supply the wants of the population, in fullness and variety equal to any country. Four weekly newspapers and one monthly magazine is pretty well for a new country with less than twenty thousand inhabitants. In political cast they stand one Whig, two Locofoco, one neutral. Of the magazine but one number has appeared.

It is difficult to understand the merits of the contests now agitating the public mind here. At the hazard of some mistakes, I will detail what seems the prominent features of the quarrel.

It seems there are two seats of government, if not in fact two Governments. A minority of the Assembly and the Supreme Court, composed of Chief Justice NELSON and Judge STRONG, met at Oregon city. The Court, on a question made, decided that a certain law fixing the seat of government at Salem is null and void. A majority of the Assembly met at Salem, and remained there, disregarding the decision of the Court, until the recent adjournment, after a session of near two months. The other Judge and the Assembly deny that any court properly constituted has been held. They maintain that the Supreme Court could only sit at Salem, and hence the sitting and acting as such at Oregon City was no court at all. A good deal of bitterness and strife has arisen in consequence of these conflicting views. The Assembly party, which is composed principally of Democrats, seek to make head against the Government officers as Whigs, and to attribute to them and to their acts all the difficulty that has ensued. The officers and judges are denounced as tyrants, oppressors, usurpers, public robbers, and swindlers, with a freedom and spontaneous boiling over of offensive epithets peculiar to that school of controversialists. It seems that Gov. GAINES, last winter when the law passed, and before the session closed, declined recognising the law as valid, for reasons then assigned by him. Those reasons have been since considered conclusive against the law by the Attorney General of the United States, and now the Supreme Court here, Judge PRATT dissenting, has decided it to be null. The court also decided that Oregon City is the legal seat of government.

The Assembly assumes the right to determine this matter their own way. They claim the power to meet where they please to enact laws. They claim the right to determine whether a law of theirs violates the organic act of Congress or not, and deny to the court the power of reviewing their acts for such cause. The dispute takes a wide range through constitutional law and parliamentary power in Territories. I can only refer you to the published decisions of the Court and the opinions of the Hon. O. C. PRATT for the positions taken on both sides.

The Assembly has memorialized Congress pretty extensively as to matter and manner. They demand that the present Territorial Government be dissolved, as incompatible with the people's rights, and hope for no better conduct on the part of any appointees of the Federal Government; they pray for the right to elect their own Governor, Secretary, and Judges; they have provided for a Convention of the people to form a State constitution, in the event that Congress shall fail to grant their memorial at the present session.

Among the aggressive acts of warfare, they re-districted the Territory, taking about all the settlements in it, adding to Judge Pratt's already large and onerous district the whole of Judge Nelson's except one county; the judicial districts being thus: To Chief Justice Nelson one county, Clackamus; to Judge Strong all north of the Columbia river, and Clatsop county; to Judge Pratt all the rest of Oregon. To make "confusion worse confounded," the times for holding courts have been changed in Judge Pratt's district. Thus we not only have the legislation of the recent session hung up in doubt as to its validity, but its acts cannot be approved by Congress without sanctioning this outrage upon all the decencies of parliamentary fairness; and the entire Territory, with slight exception, is surrendered to the judicial keeping of a Judge publicly avowing his approbation of these acts, and his readiness to enforce them; and the people will be deprived for an indefinite period of the benefit of courts in his district held under laws of undoubted validity!

From such specimens of deference to law and order one cannot augur favorably of the immediate future. Do not, however, imagine for a moment that Oregon has been or is likely to be Mormonized. Our Latter-Day Saints are made of "stuff" far less "stern." It is only "a way" they have out here of striking out into new leads and better diggings. They are *prospecting*. The glittering prizes of the future are already in mental vision earned by glorious sacrifices in this *raid* against a conservative court, and an unostentatious, quiet, harmless Government. If the crusade fail, nothing is lost.

The question recurs, What can or ought Congress to do in the matter? I answer, disapprove the act of the Assembly about which the whole controversy arose. That decision, I imagine, would be respected, although that of the court is not. Should that be done, the next session of the Assembly would go far towards repairing the calamities of the past. If that be not done, there is evidently no alternative in prospect for Oregon but a continuance of the present disorder and anarchy.

I must conclude a first epistle in reasonable space, or hazard a welcome for a second. The weather is alternate rain and sunshine; the temperature that of May at Washington; the vegetation green as in summer; and yet Oregon is not the veritable Hesperides. That place, however, is undoubtedly somewhere on the PACIFIC.

Since closing my communication of the 5th instant, the apprehensions then entertained for the fate of the steam propeller *General Warren* have since been painfully confirmed. After going out of the river on Thursday, the 29th ultimo, with about fifty persons aboard, she returned on Saturday following, signalled for a pilot, and was boarded by Capt. FLAVEL; was found to be leaking badly, and was with difficulty brought inside the bar, owing to thick weather. The captain, (THOMPSON,) on consultation, concluded to beach her, and the pilot-boat left her, bringing off nine persons. The steamer was last seen on Clatsop spit, broken to pieces, the surf driving over her. On the return of the pilot-boat, in about four hours, no appearance of the wreck was visible. It was supposed she drove to sea, or deep water, and sunk. Since then, dead bodies of the unfortunate crew and passengers, together with portions of the vessel and carcasses of the animals, have been floating ashore. None were saved but those who came off in the pilot-boat. It being considered safe to remain on board the steamer, but few were inclined to leave. I learn she was owned by Zachary & Co.

P.

*I prefer this spelling. It distinctly expresses the name of the river and valley as pronounced by that venerable gentleman whose vocation it is to christen all places, besides remembering no higher floods, no severer winters, and no more dreadful accidents than have recently occurred—"the oldest inhabitant." Mr. Wilkes erroneously adopts the French *Willamette*; Lieut. Col. Fremont is nearer the true sound, *Wahlamette*. I should be happy to see the opinion of our mutual friend, Professor Darby, upon that and certain other more important matters connected with this magnificent country.

The Legislative Council of Oregon has passed a law to remove to that Territory the remains of the Hon. S. R. THURSTON, their late Delegate in Congress, who died on his way home and was interred at Acapulco, in Mexico.

DUTCH FRIGATE FOR WASHINGTON.—The late advices from San Juan state that the Dutch frigate Prince of Orange was at that place, to sail for Havana and Washington on the 6th instant. United States sloop-of-war *Decatur*, Commodore GREEN, was in port; all well.

THE GENERAL POST OFFICE.

BY D. D. T. LEECH.

As a means of civilization, the Post Office yields in importance only to Christianity, the school-house, and the printing press. Where the mail-bags, with their humanizing contents, penetrate, ignorance and the customs of savage life disappear like the mists of night before the morning sun. The term *post* originated from the Latin *positus*, because, in the Roman empire, in the times of the Cæsars, horses were stationed at convenient distances to convey letters or passengers. Couriers for the transmission of intelligence—chiefly military—were employed in several of the ancient States; and carrier-pigeons were used for a like purpose in the times of the Crusades. But mails for the accommodation of the general public were not known till about the middle of the 16th century, when Charles V. introduced them among his vast Germanic possessions, and appointed Leonard, of Thurn and Taxis, his Postmaster General. The management of the office subsequently descended as an imperial feoff to the descendants of the house of Thurn and Taxis—a circumstance which has seriously interfered with the beneficial operation of the institution in that country.

Several of the German States have their separate posts. In others the house referred to has charge of the institution, which it controls through a Postmaster General resident at Frankfort on the Maine. The stage coaches in Germany generally are united with the post offices, and travel slower than the letter mails. As an offset to this disadvantage, they convey *parcels* as safely as letters. In several of these States "recommended" letters, paying a higher rate of postage, may be sent by these coaches, if specified on the way-bill. If a person wishes to transmit a message to the different postmasters on a route, he may send an open paper, which is received and forwarded by them respectively. Money, not beyond a certain amount, may also be transmitted, if deposited with a postmaster, his receipt therefor serving as an order for the sum on the postmaster to whom it is addressed. Contrary to the American practice, these Governments hold themselves responsible to a certain extent for losses of money mailed in the presence of of a postmaster.

In France there is a Director General of posts, and an Inspector of posts, in each department. Each post office, of which there are about four thousand, has a director and comptroller, and the necessary number of assistants. The mail coaches convey also money and passengers, and are accompanied by responsible couriers. Passengers pay a certain number of sous for each stage, and are allowed to take fifteen pounds of luggage. The Government contracts with the postmasters for the transmission of the mails, paying a stipulated price for each horse and driver. They have a separate class of mails, called "extra posts," under the exclusive control of the postmasters, which travel with great speed, owing to the activity of the postmasters and postillions. The latter never think of sleep when on duty. The right of sending mails free of charge on railroads is secured by the Government in the acts incorporating the same. A similar privilege is enjoyed on the German railroads. In France "recommended" letters may be sent on payment of double postage, and patterns of goods may be sent at one-third postage.

The English system of posts was originally introduced from Italy, but has undergone great modifications. The present establishment takes date from the reign of Elizabeth. The Postmaster General is a member of the Cabinet, and has a right to a seat in the House of Lords. The management and profits of the office were farmed out, or sold at auction, prior to 1791. The contracts (for hauling the mails merely) on the principal routes are let out by the Department, after full competition, for a term of years; but they do not cease at the expiration thereof, unless three months' notice of such intended discontinuance be previously given by the Government or contractor; or unless in case of the death of the contractor, or the annulment of his contract for failures. The mail coaches are obtained by the Government from the builders. The rural routes are let out under the direction of the Inspector of Posts for the district through which they pass. The British Government does not concern itself in the conveyance of passengers in the mail coaches, as done on the continent. The Department permits the contractors to take a limited number of that class. The Postmaster General exercises an unlimited control over the times of arrival and departure on railroad routes, although they pay no higher rates for such service than is done by the United States establishment, which latter, however, rarely undertakes to change the schedule without the consent of the companies. Such a power, if possessed by the American office, would tend materially to expedite the mails. The regularity with which the English mails arrive at and depart from the principal towns is remarkable.

The postal establishments of the other European nations are in a low condition, compared with those mentioned. The Russian system is on the German model, and has been much improved of late. The inquisitive are referred to the "Postal Guide," a valuable periodical, published by P. G. Washington, Esq., of this city; also to Major Hobbie's report of 21st December, 1848, for further particulars in regard to European postal affairs.

The archives of several of the American colonies show attempts at a very early period to provide mail facilities within their respective limits.

In Virginia, as far back as 1657, it was enacted that each owner of a plantation should furnish a messenger to forward to the next plantation the despatches passing from the seat of government to the interior, on pain of being fined a hogshead of tobacco for failure to do so. Regular mails were not, however, introduced into that colony till seventy-five years thereafter.

The colony of New York has the credit of having put in operation the first mail route on this side of the Atlantic, Governor Lovelace having, in 1672, established "a post to goe monthly between New York city and Boston and back."

The colony of Massachusetts created the first post office, the General Court having, in 1677, appointed John Heyward, "the scrivener," at Boston, "to take in letters and convey them according to their direction."

In Pennsylvania, in 1683, the philanthropic Wm. Penn established a post office at Philadelphia, and appointed Henry Waldy postmaster, with authority "to supply passengers with horses from Philadelphia to New Castle, or to the Falls of Delaware." About the same time that wise and good man caused to be put in operation a mail route from Philadelphia to the principal towns in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

In 1692 the Virginia Assembly gave Thomas Neal a patent as Postmaster General, which, however, owing to the dispersed condition of the inhabitants, was never carried into effect.

In 1700 Col. John Hamilton, of New Jersey, obtained from the British Government a patent empowering him and his heirs to establish post offices and post routes in the American colonies for twenty-one years, which he put in operation, and for which he obtained an indemnity from that Government, owing to its having been abrogated by the statute of Ann, in 1710, which consolidated the American establishment with that of the mother country.

In 1711 the mails ran between Boston and Maine once a week; and once a fortnight from the former place to Connecticut and New York. In 1717 there was a weekly route from Boston as far south as Williamsburg, Virginia; and in 1727 a once a fortnight one between Philadelphia and Annapolis.

In 1737 Col. Spotswood, previously Governor of Virginia, seems to have been the British Postmaster General for the colonies; for it is recorded that he appointed in that year the illustrious patriot and philosopher, Franklin, postmaster of Philadelphia.

In 1753 Franklin was commissioned as the British Postmaster General for the American colonies. There were then but 1,532 miles of post road in operation in the country. At this time the mails were sent from Philadelphia to the North once a week in summer, and once a fortnight in winter. The next year (1754) that great man reported with great complacency, that he had improved them, as far as New York, to tri-weekly in summer and weekly in winter. Towards the latter part of his term, which was abruptly terminated in 1774, (owing, as he says, to a "freak of ministers,") he succeeded in making the concern quite profitable to the mother country. His dismissal was followed soon after by a like appointment from a source far more acceptable to him, viz. the Congress of the Confederation; which, on the 27th of July, 1775, unanimously elected him Postmaster General, having on the previous day resolved to have an establishment of the kind for the colonies. He was allowed a salary of $1,000 a year, and to appoint a secretary and comptroller at $840; also, deputies at such points as he might deem suitable. Having, in the following year, been appointed to a higher trust, he resigned the office.

Richard Bache, his comptroller and relation, was elected as his successor on the 7th of November, 1776. The Lilliputian leger—containing about four quires of foolscap paper, bound in boards—in which this gentleman kept the accounts of his deputies, eighty in number, may still be seen at the Department.

Ebenezer Hazard was elected to the office on the 28th of January, 1782. He had previously served as postmaster in the city of New York; also as a surveyor of the posts. The public archives are exceedingly bare of information in regard to the administrations of Messrs. Bache and Hazard. Prior to 1836 there was an old box in the garret of the General Post Office which is supposed to have contained the records of those times, and to have perished in the conflagration of the building which occurred in December of that year. As, however, they were probably men of but ordinary abilities, and the operations of the establishment, owing to the disturbed and impoverished condition of the country, were very limited, the intelligence referred to, if possessed, would not, it is presumed, possess much interest.

Since the commencement of the present Constitutional Government in 1789, there have been fourteen Postmasters General, the average duration of whose term has been about four and a half years.

Samuel Osgood was the first head of the office selected by Washington. His reports show that he possessed fine abilities. He had previously served as a Delegate from Massachusetts in the Colonial Congress. The establishment was then located in New York, whence it was removed to Philadelphia, by direction of Congress, near the close of 1790. The post roads in the United States did not exceed in length one thousand miles, consisting of a long zig-zag route from Wiscasset, in Maine, via the principal towns on the Atlantic seaboard, to Savannah, in Georgia, with a few connecting cross-posts, on no portion of which was the mail conveyed oftener than tri-weekly, and on a part of it but once a fortnight. The entire annual cost of the service was $22,702. The number of post offices was seventy-five, and their gross yield $37,395 per annum. In 1851, only about sixty years thereafter, the length of routes in operation was 196,290 miles; the annual cost of transportation thereon $3,421,754; the gross revenue of the Department $6,786,498; and the number of officers 19,604. Then only a narrow district in the Easternmost States was penetrated by the mail bags. Now they traverse routes far west of the "Father of Waters;" and while one set of the Department's carriers look out upon the blue Atlantic, another water their steeds in the broad Pacific. The present Postmaster General may truly say—

> No pent up Utica contracts our powers:
> The whole boundless continent is ours.

So rapid an advance in this particular—indicating, of course, corresponding strides in the general progress of the nation—has not been witnessed in any other land during the history of the world!

The following were the only offices at the period referred to yielding a revenue of over $1,000 per annum, viz. Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Baltimore, Richmond, Petersburg, Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Norfolk, and Charleston.

In his report to the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 20, 1790, Mr. Osgood set forth a sad lack of energy and productiveness in the establishment, its revenue having in no year exceeded $35,000. To remedy this he advised the adoption of some plan of letting out the mail contracts, which would secure the service of individuals possessing the requisite capital; also a more equitable tariff of postages. The one then in operation, besides possessing the defect of charging by pennyweights and grains, rated, in his opinion, letters going large distances with a tax almost prohibitory. His report also entered a protest against the provision of law which made the Postmaster General responsible for the default of his deputies, which feature was struck out of the next act passed for the regulation of the establishment. He deposited in the United States Treasury, during the thirty-two months of his official term, $15,392 as nett profits of the concern.

His successor, Timothy Pickering, of Massachusetts, appointed November 7, 1794, was one of the first men in the country; and I doubt whether the infantile operations of the post office, still in extent amounting to but little more than a clerkship, afforded an adequate field for his abilities. The public archives show but few reports from his pen in his capacity as Postmaster General. The act of February 20, 1792, raised his annual salary to $2,000, which, two years subsequently, was advanced to $2,400.

The first extended postal law was enacted in 1782; the next in 1792. In addition to other judicious improvements introduced into the latter was a cheaper scale of postages, arranged in Federal money, and a tariff for newspapers, for the transmission of which no legal provision had hitherto been made, viz. one cent and one and a half cents, according to distance, half of the same to be retained by the postmasters collecting it. The fact that this newspaper scale remained unchanged till 1845 furnishes proof of its judicious basis.

It may be proper to state here that the fundamental postal law was revised on several subsequent occasions, prior to the year 1825, when it assumed the shape which it still retains. The operation on each occasion may be aptly compared to the pulling down of an old tenement, and the erection on its ruins of an enlarged and otherwise improved one.

Mr. Pickering having, in February, 1795, been transferred to the War Department, Joseph Habersham, of Georgia, was appointed Postmaster General on the 25th of that month, who is reputed to have succeeded admirably in imparting order and efficiency to the operations of the concern. There were now five hundred and thirty-eight post offices in the United States, and about thirteen thousand miles of post roads. The gross annual income of the office was $160,620, some $32,000 more than its expenditures. During his term he submitted to Congress an eloquent report in favor of the substitution of flogging for capital punishment (as previously prescribed by law) for stealing or robbing the mail, arguing that the latter penalty was inhumane and defeated its objects by its severity. Congress, in the act of 1795, ordered the alteration; but no jury, for several years thereafter, having been found willing to bring in a verdict of guilty in a case that would be followed by a public whipping, the law was again changed to the shape, in that particular, which it still holds, viz. imprisonment for five or ten years for the first, and death for the second offence. The profits of the establishment deposited in the United States Treasury during his term of six or seven years amounted to $363,310. In 1802 it was removed, with the other departments of the Federal Government, to Washington.

Gideon Granger, of Connecticut, appointed in that year by Mr. Jefferson to conduct the establishment, was a man of splendid talents, and supervised its affairs with great energy. There were about one thousand post offices in the country when he entered on his duties. The concern made rapid and steady progress during the whole of his long administration of twelve years.

Congress, in 1810, passed an act superseding all post routes previously existing, and creating a new list. A similar step at the present time, with regard to the voluminous, scattered, and conflicting lists now standing on the statute books, would have many useful tendencies.

Mr. Granger advised Congress to inhibit negroes from carrying the mail, because they might thus be enabled to form chains of communication for conveying schemes of intelligence, for their own benefit, of hazardous tendencies in regard to their white neighbors. His suggestion was adopted, and such prohibition still forms a feature of the postal law.

The Department about this period took the novel step of acting as its own contractor for carrying the mails between Philadelphia and Baltimore, the coaches and horses being owned, and the drivers employed, by the General Government. The revenue from passengers during three years overpaid all expenses about $11,000. Serious thoughts of extending the system were entertained by Congress, but were wisely abandoned. The perplexities, patronage, and responsibilities of the Department, already quite unwieldy, would thereby have been multiplied almost infinitely.

A question of a more exciting nature occupied the head of the office and the Post Office committees in Congress about this time. I refer to the remonstrances against opening the post offices and transporting the mails on the Sabbath. Prior to the year 1810 postmasters who delivered letters on that day did so merely as a matter of courtesy. The act of that year made it their duty to attend at their offices for that purpose at all reasonable hours on each day of the week. For the Sabbath Mr. Granger fixed these hours at one hour after the arrival and assorting of the mail; and, when this occurred during the time of public worship, at one hour after the closing thereof. Numerous petitions, asking a repeal of the clause referred to, were sent to Congress by religious bodies in different portions of the country. They argued that the practices of opening the post offices and running the mails on Sunday contravened the Divine law as much as the transaction of commercial business on that day; further, that the rights of conscience were violated by the postal regulations in question. The Congressional committees appointed to report on the case gave the opinion that the social, intellectual, and religious interests of the community would be prejudiced by the stoppage of the mails one day in seven; that Congress was asked by the petitioners to become umpire in an ecclesiastical question, a class of cases over which the Constitution gave it no control; also, that the rights of conscience were not invaded, as all who engaged in the postal service did so voluntarily. Congress ordered that the remonstrants have leave to withdraw their papers.

Early in 1814 Mr. Madison having taken offence at Mr. Granger's conduct in refusing to follow his advice, after having solicited it, in relation to the appointment of deputy postmasters at Philadelphia and one or two other points, dismissed him from office. The profits paid into the United States treasury by the office during his official period was $291,579.

Return J. Meigs, of Ohio, his successor, took the reins of the establishment in March of that year, at which date there were about three thousand postmasters, and the receipts of the establishment had run up to a million of dollars per annum. He was not distinguished for energy or ability, yet the office yielded to the treasury $887,207 during his term of nine years.

The administration of Mr. McLean was a distinguished one. He labored untiringly himself, and had the happy tact of infusing his own energetic spirit into his associates and subordinates. Before his time postmasters had transmitted their funds to the Department in bank notes, and remittances had been made by it to contractors in the same way. He made a highly important improvement on this loose and hazardous mode of procedure by ordering that the contractors should receive their compensation through drafts on postmasters. Congress raised his salary to $6,000 a year, the amount paid the Cabinet officers, thereby, in effect, raising the Post Office (previously regarded as a mere bureau) to the rank of a Department of the Government. Mr. McLean did not, however, go into the Cabinet. In 1829 he was transferred to the Supreme Bench, owing to a disagreement between himself and the new President, Jackson, as to the principle on which deputy postmasters should be removed. He kept the income of the establishment constantly afloat by improvements in the service, not attempting to make it a source of pecuniary profit to the Government, which principle seems to have been adhered to by most of his successors.

President Jackson, early in 1829, called to the postal helm Wm. T. Barry, of Kentucky, a generous, liberal gentleman, the early part of whose administration, owing to the extensive augmentations of mail facilities which he ordered, gave the most auspicious omens; but the latter part of which was overcast with clouds in consequence of his being unable to pay his contractors without resort to loans from the banks. He took a seat in the President's Cabinet, as done by all succeeding heads of the Department. His popularity being clearly on the wane, so much so that, owing to the bankrupt condition of the concern, a Congressional committee held lengthy sittings to investigate the causes of its embarrassments, the President, in 1835, transferred him to a post requiring less financial skill.

Amos Kendall, of Kentucky, a gentleman possessing a very high order of administrative talents, was next appointed to the office, who soon succeeded, by the admirable measures he adopted for the purpose, in restoring the lost credit of the concern, as well as in paying off the debt of about half a million of dollars, resulting from the kind-hearted Mr. Barry's unsuccessful policy. Mr. Kendall further succeeded in inducing Congress to order such a reorganization of the duties of the establishment as would make the settling branch a bureau of the Treasury Department, disconnecting it entirely from the province of the Postmaster General, which properly consisted in originating accounts, through the appointment of postmasters, and the making of contracts for transporting the mails. This important act, besides creating an independent officer, styled Auditor, for the purpose referred to, provided for the appointment of a Third Assistant Postmaster General, (a Second Assistant having been authorized in 1810,) and gave the establishment a suitable number of clerks, with fair salaries, viz. thirty-seven for the Department proper, and forty-three for the office of the Auditor. The very valuable alteration in the mode of collecting the revenues of the offices, above referred to as made by Mr. McLean, now received a salutary modification, through the introduction, by Mr. Kendall, of a "collection order," which authorized the mail contractors to collect from postmasters on their routes the entire postage balances in their hands. By this simple means the Postmaster General is enabled promptly to collect from a large majority of his deputies, especially those most difficult to reach in any other way, the numerous small dues of the Department. Doubtless, our city merchants would rejoice at being enabled to settle with their creditors in a similar way, through drafts on their numerous small debtors! In Mr. K.'s time the establishment assumed, in the main, the shape it still retains. With the General Post Office, and views the fine adaptations of its bureaus, indulge the complacent reflection—

Et quorum magna pars fui.

On his resignation, in May, 1840, John M. Niles, of Connecticut, was selected by Mr. Van Buren for the post. He had the necessary mind, but was in office too short a time to establish a character, the political revolution of that year having made it prudent for him to abandon the position on the 3d of March following.

The new President, General Harrison, placed over the Department, on the following day, Francis Granger, of New York. He, too, possessed suitable qualifications, but continued in office too short a period to become familiar with its details, the Cabinet, of which he was a member, having resigned in September following, in consequence of a rupture with Mr. Tyler, whom the decease of Gen. Harrison had placed in the Presidential chair.

In that month Mr. Tyler commissioned Charles A. Wickliffe as Postmaster General, who filled the office till the 3d of March, 1845. The establishment was in a prosperous condition during the whole of his official term. On the day of his withdrawal Congress passed a post office bill reducing the previous high and complicated rates of postage to five cents on letters not going over three hundred miles, nor weighing over half an ounce. This was a great relief to the citizens generally, and important as introducing a new principle into the postage tariff, viz. weight instead of the numbers of pieces of paper embraced in a mail package. This law also introduced another important principle, viz. that the correspondence of the country should not, as previously, be taxed for the conveyance of passengers. This it did by the clause requiring the Postmaster General, in all future contracts for conveying the mails, to regard only their certain, safe, and expeditious transportation.

On the accession of Mr. Polk to the Presidency, on the 4th of March, 1845, Cave Johnson, of Tennessee, was put in charge of the postal reins. He was a gentleman of fair talents, large experience in public affairs, and remarkably bland manners. He discharged his duties, with credit and usefulness, exactly four years.

President Taylor selected for the office, on the 4th of March, 1849, Jacob Collamer, of Vermont, who united to an excellent moral character great firmness, prudence, and judgment. At his suggestion Congress made a handsome addition to the clerical force of the concern. The death of the President, about sixteen months subsequently, and the formation of a new Cabinet, again created a vacancy in the post.

The present incumbent, Nathan K. Hall, of New York, is a considerably younger man than most of his predecessors, having been but forty years of age at the date of his appointment. Owing to my relative position to him, it does not become me to speak of his qualifications. The country has had considerable opportunity to judge of them. I deem it not improper, however, to say that he devotes his time and energies to the supervision of the office, and evinces a laudable ambition to give the greatest practicable energy to its operations. Much credit is due to him for his agency in effecting a three cent postage rate.

As a history of the establishment would be, in my opinion, quite defective which failed to notice the two gentlemen that filled the office of First Assistant from 1800 to 1851, Abraham Bradley and Selah R. Hobbie, I deem it proper to refer to them here. The former acted as Prime Minister of the different postal chiefs down to 1829, the latter during the residue of the period. They were alike distinguished for their intimate acquaintance with every thing of importance touching postal affairs, and for their industry and devotion to the interests of the Department. Their services were of great value to it throughout their respective terms.

The Department has now on its registers over six thousand mail routes, and nearly as many mail contractors. Within the last few years one or two new classes of agents have been extensively employed in its operations, adding much to its efficiency as well as to its cares. I refer to mail messengers and route agents—the latter more properly styled "travelling postmasters." Of the former several hundred are employed to convey the mails, to and fro, between the steamboats and railroad cars having contracts with the Postmaster General, and the landings or depots, who, by an instantaneous exchange of pouches, obviate delays in the through mails. The travelling postmasters, of whom there are about one hundred and fifty, rate and post-bill the mail packages handed them during the hour intervening between the closing of the mails and the departure of the cars, whereby they are forwarded as early as if placed in the office before the making up of the mails. This is a vast accommodation to the business of the country. The benefits of the establishment have also been greatly enhanced, of late, by the introduction of a system of ocean mail lines, which, although in their infancy, already extend to England, France, Germany, Cuba, the Isthmus of Darien, and our Pacific settlements. Efforts are being made to form mail connexions with other European countries and the South American States. These add to our national respectability, and promote universal intimacy and brotherhood.

I alluded in the commencement of this article to the regularity and dispatch of the English and French posts; but it is doubtful whether the United States mails do not, at our principal towns, excel them in these particulars.

The enormous augmentation in the size of our mails is also worthy of comment. Only twenty-five years ago the boot of a single coach sufficed for any mail leaving our principal cities. Now, at New York, Washington, and others of our large commercial towns, they amount to several tons each day.

The Post Office Department and the Sixth Auditor's office are kept in the beautiful marble building on E street, near the Patent Office, midway between the Capitol and the President's Mansion. It has about one hundred and fifty clerks, over half of whom are assigned to the Auditor. It stands unrivalled among the Executive Departments in regard to the extent, if not also to the importance, of its operations.

A FLOURY TRIBUTE.—At the Charleston (S. C.) theatre, a few evenings ago, several times during the performances, the actors as well as that portion of the audience occupying the parquet and boxes, were greeted with a shower of something white, which seemed to be thrown from one of the upper tiers. At the point of time which defined the limit between the virtue and the absurdity of patience, it was discovered that the authors of this floral demonstration were two facetious young gentlemen, occupants of the third tier, each being provided with a bag of fine wheat flour. They were held to bail by the Mayor to behave better for the future, but surety to that end not at once appearing, the florulent youths were locked up for the present.

A WONDERFUL PRESERVATION.—The following very interesting story is taken from a Devonshire (England) paper:

"Dudleigh Salterton has been the scene of a most thrilling incident. Six little children, on Wednesday morning, got into a boat on the beach, and a mischievous boy shoved it off. The boat drifted away to sea before the children were missed. Terrible was the agony of the mothers when they knew it. A number of men went off in all directions; every boat was on the lookout until far into the night. Daylight returned and still nothing was heard about them; they were lost either in the expanse of the wide ocean, or buried within its insatiable depths. A Plymouth fisherman fishing early in the morning saw something floating in the distance; he bore down to it, and discovered it to be a boat, and in the bottom the six children, all cuddled in like a nest of birds, fast asleep, God having mercifully granted them that solace after a day of terror and despair. He took them aboard, feasted them with bread and cheese, and gladdened their despairing hearts with a promise to take them home. Between three and four in the afternoon the fisherman was seen in the offing with the boat astern. All eyes were turned towards him; the best spy-glass in the town was rubbed again and again, and at last they fairly made out that it was the identical boat. The news flew through the town, the mothers came frantic to the beach, for there were no children discovered in the boat; none to be seen in the sloop. Intense was the agony of suspense, and all alike shared it with the parents. At last the boat came in, and the word went round 'they are safe,' and many stout-hearted men burst into tears, women shrieked with joy, and became almost frantic with their insupportable happiness. It was indeed a memorable day; and a prayer, eloquent for its rough sincerity, was offered up to Almighty God, who, in his infinite mercy, had spared these innocent children from the perils and terrors of the sea during that fearful night. Five of these children were under five years of age; the sixth is but nine years old."